

MEDIA RELEASE

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Survey reveals fresh attitude to getting older

A new survey of over 1,500 Australians released today, reveals that more than 60 per cent of people are looking forward to getting older and 76 per cent of respondents value the contribution of Australia's ageing population.

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) survey was undertaken to mark National Psychology Week and is designed to better understand Australian attitudes towards ageing.

"Rather than the common myth of a dreary old age, the majority of Australians are looking forward to older age and retirement, with benefits including freedom, an active social life and spending more time with family," said APS President, Amanda Gordon.

"Importantly, our views of at what age one is considered old are shifting."

Half the respondents (52%) aged 18 to 40 believe a person is only considered to be aged once they reach their seventies and 55 per cent of respondents aged 61 years and over view people as aged when they are in their eighties.

"The survey found that the view of whether a person is considered 'aged' is no longer determined solely by their birthday but more related to lifestyle factors. Forty-five per cent of respondents thought that a person's outlook on life determined whether they were old."

So, what is important to us as we get older:

- 67 per cent of those aged 40 to 60 put leisure activities at the top of the list.
- Access to health services (66%).
- Spending time with family and friends (57%).

As part of National Psychology Week, the APS is focusing on positive ageing and helping older adults adopt strategies that promote fitness, health and a positive outlook in life.

"The two main ingredients for positive ageing are a healthy body and a healthy mind," said Ms Gordon.

"Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and having regular checkups is important as we get older, but it is also essential to ensure that we keep our mind fit and healthy."

"This can be as easy as challenging yourself with a crossword puzzle, picking up a book from the local library or learning something new at the local adult education centre."

Ms Gordon says that maintaining relationships with family and friends is also an important part of positive ageing, providing a support network to help deal with any issues, such as stress.

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Other key findings:

- One-third of respondents suggested that older adults would assist them in taking care of children.
- 67 per cent believed they would be called on to care for an ageing relative.

Respondents also had a say about the key community issues around our ageing population:

- 54 per cent were concerned about limited access to healthcare services because of increased demand.
- 46 per cent were concerned about the shrinking workforce.
- 23 per cent expressed concern about access to leisure activities.

“Participants in the survey recognised that with a quarter of the Australian population set to be over 65 years of age in the next 30 to 40 years, the dynamics of our community life will change,” said Ms Gordon.

“Recognising this will help them prepare for these changes, such as setting up healthcare benefits and saving for retirement.”

To download the full research report visit www.psychologyweek.com.au

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Notes to Editors:

- APS president Amanda Gordon and Dr Helen Lindner are available for interview.
- Top tips on positive ageing and fact sheet on research results are available on request.

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APS referral service: The APS provides a free referral service for the general public, GPs and other health professionals who are seeking the advice and assistance of a qualified psychologist, online at www.psychology.org.au or call 1800 333 497.

About the survey: The APS survey was undertaken with 1507 participants nationwide in 2007. The survey aimed to explore attitudes towards ageing of the Australian population and whether these differed across age groups; public concerns about the ageing population; and the plans and expectations of baby boomers.

Top tips for positive ageing:

1. Take part in regular physical activity.
2. Eat a healthy well-balanced diet.
3. Have regular health checks.
4. Keep your mind active, alert and flexible by taking part in activities that stimulate the brain and that you enjoy such as reading, completing crosswords, or hobbies that promote ongoing interest.
5. Maintain relationships with others including family and friends who can provide fun and support.
6. Manage stress levels by talking problems through with others, taking part in relaxation or learning some problem solving or goal setting techniques.